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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 243rd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 25 January 1994, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. CORTI

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

Second periodic report of New Zealand (CEDAW/C/NZE/2 and Add.1)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. O'Regan, Ms. Rowe and Mr. McKinnon (New Zealand) took places at the Committee table.

2. Ms. O'REGAN (New Zealand) said that the submission of its second report was timely, in that New Zealand had just celebrated the centennial of women's suffrage; women in New Zealand had the right to vote since 1893. That celebration had also provided an opportunity to assess the current position of women and the remaining barriers to true equality. A new Human Rights Act had been adopted in 1993 which prohibited discrimination not only on grounds of sex, race and religion, but also pregnancy, marital and family status, sexual orientation, disability, age, employment status and political opinion and other grounds.

3. Since the submission of its first report, New Zealand had undergone significant economic change. The change of government in 1990 had brought with it an accelerated programme of social and economic reforms, including the reform of the welfare system. Among long-term trends affecting women in New Zealand, the two-parent family was becoming less dominant and single-parent families, extended families and other family groupings were becoming more numerous. Women currently made up 43 per cent of its paid workforce and were establishing their own businesses at a faster rate than men. They had also made gains in many former male bastions such as the law, medicine and business. Girls and women were surpassing males at most levels of the education system and the proportion of women studying at university level in several fields had increased to roughly half. In addition, Maori women were playing a central role in the renaissance taking place in their language and culture.

4. Women currently held powerful positions in public life. The Governor General and the mayors of three of the largest cities were women, as were 20 per cent of the members of Parliament. The Ministry of Women's Affairs was regarded as a key policy agency. Women's non-governmental organizations, including Pacific Islands women's groups, which were gathering momentum, had played a crucial role throughout New Zealand's history.

5. Turning to the status of New Zealand's reservations to the Convention, she reported that New Zealand had withdrawn its reservation concerning the employment of women in underground working mines. There had been some advances in employment opportunities for women in the armed forces: women in the Air Force could now perform all combat roles during peacetime, and, in the Navy, women could serve on combat vessels within New Zealand waters. However, the Government had decided not to change the overall policy with regard to the employment of women in combat roles; therefore, New Zealand was not yet in a position to remove its reservation. With regard to law enforcement agencies the new Human Rights Act reflected a significant policy change under which all law

(Ms. O'Regan, New Zealand)

enforcement duties, including those involving violence, could be carried out regardless of gender. With regard to paid maternity leave, the Government considered that payment for maternity leave was a matter for negotiation between the parties to an employment contract. For that reason, it wished to maintain its reservation.

6. She noted that women's average hourly earnings remained around 81 per cent of men's and said that equal employment opportunities were key to eliminating discrimination and ensuring women's equal participation in the economy. The Equal Employment Opportunities Trust had been established to promote equal employment opportunities as good management practice. Women in paid employment were more likely than men to have responsibility for the care of children and elderly dependants, hence efforts were being made to promote a "family friendly" workplace. Most single-parent families were headed by women and had much lower incomes than two-parent families. A pilot project had been designed to help single parents enter paid employment. New Zealand's population was ageing and elderly women significantly outnumbered men. Agreement had recently been reached on a retirement income policy that required State benefits to be adjusted annually in line with the consumer price index. Women would continue to be eligible for benefits as individuals.

7. More cases of violence against women were being brought to the police and increasing numbers of women were seeking the assistance of women's refuges. The Government had taken a number of steps to address the situation, including subsidies to women's refuges and legal and policy measures. The New Zealand police had identified family violence as a key concern in their five-year strategic plan. Pornography was also an area of great concern to many New Zealand women. Recent legislation in the area represented a major shift in the Government approach to censorship. Under the new legislation, censorship decisions would be based on actual or likely harm that would result from the availability of a particular material. The previous approach had focused on moral acceptability and had made a distinction between public and private use, which had been removed. Possession of banned material had been made an offence, in an attempt to improve the effectiveness of the law in dealing with underground markets for extreme material. The legislation also contained provisions regulating the packaging or display of such material.

8. Women's health had emerged as a key issue, and national screening programmes for cervical cancer and breast cancer had been established. Moreover, the Government had taken significant steps to involve more Maori women in the design and delivery of health services, which had led to the development of more effective and appropriate services. Maori women had been active in many other areas as well, most notably the business and entrepreneurial sectors. They had also been instrumental in the revival of the Maori language and the establishment of schools in which the entire curriculum was taught in the Maori language.

9. Education was critical to the advancement of women, and New Zealand was proud of the high standard of its early childhood care and education. At the secondary level, greater numbers of young women continued beyond the compulsory age, and there had been a marked increase in the number of female students

(Ms. O'Regan, New Zealand)

taking maths and science. The Government was working to improve the retention rates for Maori girls and to ensure that the school curriculum was gender-inclusive and non-discriminatory. At the university level, attempts were being made to attract women to such non-traditional areas as science and engineering.

10. Turning to the second report of Niue, which she was presenting at the request of that Government, she said that women in Niue had made significant strides; several women had attained senior posts in Government and in the educational system, and were now entering non-traditional fields of employment as well. Niue had recently been accepted as a full member of UNESCO and hoped to become a member of the World Health Organization (WHO), and its Government hoped that membership would benefit women.

11. The report of Tokelau, New Zealand's last remaining non-self-governing territory, was also before the Committee. Key constitutional changes were currently being implemented and a framework of government based on the atoll was being put into place. That constituted a further step in the continuing process whereby Tokelau was assuming greater control of its own affairs, including the manner in which the rights accorded to its citizens under the Convention would be protected.

12. Turning to the general comments of the pre-session working group, she said that women's groups, including Maori women's groups and other non-governmental organizations, had been involved in all stages of the preparation of the report. It should also be noted that Te Ohu Wahkatupu, the Maori women's policy unit of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, had been consulted on all its aspects.

13. Information had been requested concerning other States associated with New Zealand, besides Niue and Tokelau, to which the Convention had been extended. The Cook Islands was a self-governing State in free association with New Zealand, and its Government was aware of its obligations under the Convention. However, because of limited resources it had been unable to complete its report in time for the current session.

Article 2

14. Ms. O'REGAN (New Zealand) said that the Parental Leave and Employment Protection Act 1987 established minimum entitlements for parents in both the private and public sectors at the time of the birth or adoption of a child and provided unpaid leave of up to 12 months to be shared by both parents. An employee's job must generally be kept open, unless it was a key position or the employee was made redundant. All employees were protected against dismissal for reasons connected with pregnancy or taking parental leave. Most women employed under collective contracts in the public sector had access to maternity leave grants amounting to six weeks of their salary. That sector accounted for approximately 30 per cent of women employed.

15. Marital status complaints made up just 17 per cent of all complaints to the New Zealand Human Rights Commission. Sex discrimination complaints, other than in the area of marital status, constituted over 70 per cent of complaints, mostly in the area of employment. Many complaints concerning de facto

(Ms. O'Regan, New Zealand)

relationships involved access to credit and joint accounts. Those matters were settled through mediation, resulting in compensation and revision of the policies of the private-sector institutions involved. The Human Rights Act 1993, which would come into force on 1 February 1994, contained a broad definition of marital status, including single, married, separated, divorced, widowed and de facto status.

16. The Human Rights Act exemption in respect of superannuation or life insurance policies was due to the different life expectancies of men and women. Women, on average, lived longer than men. Exemptions under the Act were permitted only when supported by actuarial or statistical data. While women paid less for life and term insurance, they paid more for annuities and other retirement schemes. In some superannuation schemes, women received smaller benefits than men for the same contributions or paid higher contributions for the same benefits. Nevertheless, those benefits continued for more years for women. On average, men and women received the same total benefits from the schemes. Group life policies and medical insurance did not have different premiums for men and women. Many group superannuation schemes did not differentiate on the basis of gender.

Article 4

17. Ms. ROWE (New Zealand) said that it was too early to evaluate definitively the results of the Suffrage Centennial Year. Throughout 1993 New Zealand had carried out a wide range of commemorative, historical, educational and research activities and projects. Television documentaries, films and books about women in New Zealand had been produced. Daily radio and television broadcasts provided information on women's lives, achievements and history. There had been international conferences of women judges, historians and scientists.

18. Government departments had organized their own suffrage projects. Activities included scholarships to encourage women in non-traditional areas or to further the education of women already employed. Major research projects had been conducted on women in the rural sector, the representation of women in management, and the social and economic needs of older women living alone.

19. Local groups had organized festivals, exhibitions, pageants and displays. Local authorities had commissioned art works for civic buildings and created displays in parks and reserves. Throughout the Year there had been special activities at Parliament, including photographic displays of past and current women Members of Parliament and women suffragists and the production of educational material on the significance and history of women's suffrage. The Government had allocated funds to the 1993 Suffrage Centennial Year Trust, which had been distributed to hundreds of projects throughout the country. The Year had provided an opportunity to assess the current status of women and consider what still had to be done to achieve true gender equality in New Zealand.

20. Government funding of the Wahine Pakari programme had increased eightfold over the past two years. Upon completion of their six-week training course, trainer-motivators returned to their own communities to train other women in self-employment and could also receive funding from other sources, including

(Ms. Rowe, New Zealand)

Government agencies. Women seeking to establish a business could receive financial assistance and advice through the Business Development Boards, which operated grant schemes to increase international competitiveness; the Community Employment Group, which focused on developing business and management skills; and the New Zealand Employment Service, which operated the enterprise allowance scheme, providing income in the initial stages of establishing a business. The Maori Women's Development Fund, which was administered by the Maori Women's Welfare League provided loans to assist Maori women to establish new businesses. The Fund had received significant Government assistance since its establishment in 1986.

21. Women's studies courses and programmes were offered at some secondary schools, many polytechnical institutions and most universities - sometimes up to the doctoral level - and through community education centres and private training providers.

Article 5

22. Ms. O'REGAN (New Zealand) said that her Government was committed to gender-inclusiveness in all aspects of education policy and development. One of the country's national education goals was to ensure equality of educational opportunity for all New Zealanders by identifying and removing barriers to achievement. The gender-inclusive curriculum acknowledged the educational needs and experiences of girls equally with boys, both in content and in the language and methods of teaching. The Ministry of Education had developed a number of strategies to ensure gender-inclusiveness in all areas of its work. All new policy, research projects and publications were required to conform to established criteria, using non-stereotypical role models and non-sexist language. Such material had been produced for use in schools in New Zealand for nearly 20 years, during which its range and quality had improved greatly. There was greater variety in the portrayal of girls and boys in non-stereotypical roles. The 1993-1994 work programme of the Ministry of Education included a project to develop action plans for improving the quality of education for girls at the pre-tertiary level. Particular emphasis had been placed on the education of Maori girls.

23. Pre-natal and post-natal education was available nation-wide. Pre-natal education was provided by a range of organizations and was generally offered at the later stages of pregnancy and included information on the birthing process. Health-promotion information was also provided to women throughout their pregnancies. Information was also given on topics such as the importance of good nutrition, the effects of alcohol and smoking on foetal development and the importance of immunization. Post-natal education was usually provided free of charge by general practitioners, nurses, midwives and the Plunket Society, which provided health care to children under five on a comprehensive and free basis.

24. There was some evidence that mainstream services were not well used by Maori mothers, who tended to be younger and had a higher fertility rate. One in two Maori households was headed by a sole parent, usually a woman. Ways were being sought to meet the particular needs of Maori women. The Tipu Ora programme was a community based Maori health promotion and intervention

(Ms. O'Regan, New Zealand)

programme for mothers and children and complemented mainstream health services, focusing on parenting support and good parenting practices. The programme had helped to reduce smoking and the number of low-birth-weight babies, promote breast-feeding, improve immunization rates and significantly lower the number of Maori cot deaths.

25. The Maori Women's Welfare League had established 14 health clinics in areas with a high Maori population. Those clinics provided both pre- and post-natal care and education. The Ministry of Maori Development provided funding for a variety of health programmes initiated by tribal bodies and had also developed projects with trust funds focusing on such issues as cot death, immunization, family violence, and drug and alcohol abuse. The distinctive feature of those projects was that the tribal bodies were developing their own health-care services. The Public Health Commission was examining the status of pre-natal and post-natal programmes throughout New Zealand and was aware that current programmes did not always meet the needs of Maori women, especially teenage mothers.

26. A wide range of women's groups had been active in changing New Zealand's censorship legislation. Anti-pornography lobby groups, church organizations and broad-based women's groups sought greater restrictions on the availability of violent and pornographic material, the introduction of a possession offence for banned material, and controls on displaying such material in retail outlets and on advertising billboards. The Films, Videos and Publications Classification Act 1993 made the possession of banned material an offence and introduced new controls for displaying material with age restrictions. While some women's organizations sought more restrictive legislation, all would agree that the changes represented a positive shift in censorship policy. The Act would come fully into effect after the three existing censorship bodies had been consolidated into the Office of Film and Literature Classification, which was expected to be in operation by early April 1994.

27. While the use of women's refuges had continued to increase each year, that might simply be the result of greater awareness of the issue of family violence and of the available sources of support for women who experienced such violence. The New Zealand police had adopted an active arrest policy, treating all cases of domestic violence in the same way as assaults against strangers. The women themselves no longer had to press charges for an arrest to be made. In July 1993, the police had launched a high-profile public-education campaign with the clear message that family violence was a crime. The Government was committed to reducing the incidence of family violence and addressing the concerns of victims through a coordinated crime-prevention strategy. The Crime Prevention Action Group, an interdepartmental group of Government officials, had concluded that strategies to reduce family violence should focus on its causes, such as power and control issues within relationships arising from gender-based inequality, public attitudes relating to "appropriate" roles for women and men in the family, parenting and child-rearing practices, and social-structural factors that placed stress on families. The Government's aim was to develop educational initiatives to change attitudes so that family violence was regarded as totally unacceptable social behaviour.

(Ms. O'Regan, New Zealand)

Article 6

28. There was evidence that sex workers in New Zealand were relatively free of HIV/AIDS. As of June 1993, only 17 women had developed AIDS out of 48 diagnosed with HIV. A study of HIV prevalence at sexually-transmitted-disease clinics had indicated low rates of HIV infection among women and heterosexual men. Factors identified as contributing to the low incidence of HIV/AIDS among sex workers included widespread condom use, which pre-dated the appearance of HIV/AIDS, and government-funded needle-exchange programmes designed to minimize the spread of HIV among intravenous drug users. Surveys had found that there was a growing realization among the general public of the risk of contracting the HIV/AIDS virus. Nevertheless, there was still room for improving knowledge and behaviour regarding HIV/AIDS and preventing its spread.

29. Women's groups had been concerned about the risks of late diagnosis of women with HIV and had underscored the need for information and programmes which specifically addressed the issue of HIV/AIDS and women, including issues arising from pregnancy and breast-feeding. A Government committee had recently reviewed the guidelines for breast-feeding and breast-milk banks and had affirmed that breast-milk banks should ensure that donors were tested for HIV/AIDS and that all breast milk should be pasteurized.

Article 7

30. During the reporting period, increasing numbers of women had entered Parliament in New Zealand. Each election since 1984 had brought more women into Parliament. Women had held some of the most important Cabinet portfolios, including those of Health, Finance, Police, Housing, Labour and Social Welfare. It would be interesting to see whether the new electoral system based on proportional representation would lead to further increases in the number of women in Parliament and possibly the Cabinet.

31. Women also played a leading role within political parties in New Zealand. In 1992, the New Zealand National Party had been the first to elect a woman as its President. There were no definitive studies on why women were successful at the local governmental level. It seemed that when there were more women candidates, more women were elected. Women might be more attracted to local politics, which were less likely to be disruptive if they had a range of other responsibilities, such as child care. Furthermore, involvement in local government was seen as a logical progression from community-based groups, which were often the first step women took in political life. A study conducted in the early 1980s had showed that most of the women local-body candidates preferred to work at that level where they could see the problems involved, talk to the people affected and keep in touch with voters.

Article 10

32. There had not been any reduction in the education budget but rather a substantial increase, particularly in the early childhood and tertiary sectors, in response to increased enrolments. Rural schools in New Zealand closed only when the school enrolment fell below 10 students: only 5 of 2,811 rural schools had been closed in 1993, and at the same time three new rural schools had been

(Ms. O'Regan, New Zealand)

opened. Very small schools were being consolidated into larger, higher quality units of 50 pupils or more. The Government provided transport assistance, depending on the pupil's age and distance from the nearest school and the availability of public transport. There were no fees for correspondence courses for primary and secondary schoolchildren and only very low fees for adults at that level, which did not seem to have affected enrolment. The Government was meeting the educational needs of rural areas through the creation of schools for children aged 5 to 18, weightings in operational school funding, and funding for a wide range of services including, inter alia, home-based early childhood services, boarding allowances where necessary and "remote service" allowances for teachers.

33. Ms. ROWE (New Zealand) observed that in order to expand opportunities for disadvantaged groups to participate at all levels of the educational system, the Government had attempted during the past five years to change teaching practices and approaches to the curriculum and, indeed, the participation and retention rates for Maori girls at the pre-tertiary level had been steadily improving.

34. The overall number of Maori and Pacific Island girls entering tertiary education was not declining, it was just that fewer entered directly from secondary school. Indeed, between 1986 and 1991, the total number of Maori university students had more than doubled and half of those were women; the proportion of Maori in the total student population had risen from 3.7 per cent to 6.7 per cent, with an average annual growth rate of 21 per cent, and similar increases had been reported at polytechnic institutes.

35. Differences in the participation rates of population groups at tertiary institutions did not constitute prima facie evidence of discrimination, there being many other factors to be taken into account. The Government was working to improve the participation and retention rates and attainment levels of Maori and Pacific Island girls and women at all levels, through a range of strategies including the development of ethnically sensitive curricula; a 10-point plan for Maori aimed at encouraging Maori language initiatives at all levels; the involvement of Maori families as partners in education; the hiring of more Maori teachers in higher education; the establishment of government-funded programmes in which Pacific Island children were immersed in their own language and culture; and the development of a programme focusing on parental education for women with young children.

36. As to making tertiary education more accessible, the New Zealand Government provided deferred loans to students to cover fees and living expenses. The Ministry of Education's figures indicated that more women of a mature age were currently participating in tertiary education than in the past, their numbers having doubled since 1988. Moreover, the numbers of women and men enrolled in veterinary science, medicine and dental surgery were currently comparable. By 1991, women graduates in science-related subjects had risen to 54 per cent in medical science, 46 per cent in the natural sciences, 27 per cent in mathematics and computer sciences and 10 per cent in engineering. Science and engineering faculties in universities, aware of the underrepresentation of women, were making efforts to increase their numbers, and some faculties had developed formal equal-educational-opportunity programmes and strategic plans to that end.

(Ms. Rowe, New Zealand)

Article 11

37. While unemployment rates of Maori and Pacific Island women had declined between 1991 and 1993, they remained significantly higher than that of European women (21.4 per cent, 19.8 per cent and 6.1 per cent respectively). A number of factors contributed to that situation, including the restructuring of the economy, which had led to a reduction in the number of unskilled jobs, a shift away from the manufacturing sector, where Maori and Pacific Island women were concentrated, a lack of employment opportunities in regions where Maori women were concentrated, and lower levels of school attendance and educational achievement with consequently limited access to tertiary education.

38. The Government believed that education and training was vital for Maori and Pacific Island women seeking jobs, and had founded the Education and Training Support Agency to run courses for people without formal schooling, which it was hoped would be attended by 50 per cent Maori and 10 per cent Pacific Islanders. It should be noted that the Maori people comprised 12 per cent of the total New Zealand population and Pacific Islanders 5 per cent. The courses in question took place in a wide variety of local and community settings and sought to enhance skills. As another way to assist Maori women seeking jobs, the Government's New Zealand Employment Service had organized the Wahine Ahuru-Turning Point programme, in which female Maori employment advisers worked with Maori clients; and there had been a number of successful placements. There were similar programmes for Pacific Island women as well.

39. With regard to the defence of the rights of women workers by trade unions, it was the position of the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions that they had consistently provided support in four ways: the promotion of public policies ranging from equal pay to parental leave to protection against sexual harassment; industrial bargaining, aimed particularly at reducing the differential between gender-based hierarchical structures; the encouragement of equal-employment-opportunity programmes and data collection to reveal discrimination; and the furnishing of support in grievances against employers.

Article 12

40. Ms. O'REGAN (New Zealand) said, with regard to the impact of the decentralization and restructuring of the health care system on women, that the mechanisms by which health services, almost 80 per cent of which were publicly funded, were financed and delivered had been reorganized in an attempt to improve access and effectiveness while holding down costs. In July 1993, New Zealand's 14 area health boards had been replaced with 4 regional health authorities which acted as purchasers of services from the best provider, whether public, private or voluntary. The regional health authorities were to be funded equitably according to their populations. A core national advisory committee on health had been established to advise the Government on the best mix of services to be funded through the regional health authorities, and both the committee and the authorities were consulting with their populations about the services they purchased.

(Ms. O'Regan, New Zealand)

41. There were four sources of policy advice on women's health: the Ministry of Health; the Public Health Commission, which acted as purchaser of public health services; the Ministry of Women's Affairs; and a ministerial advisory committee on women's health, which monitored regional health authorities and advised the Ministry of Health on priorities. The major public hospitals had been restructured into 23 crown health enterprises, which contracted with the regional health authorities and the Public Health Commission to provide services. Primary care services continued to be provided by a wide range of public, private and voluntary agencies, and were also purchased by the regional health authorities.

42. The Government's medium-term objectives for health services included improving access to health and disability services, and improving their quality, appropriateness and efficiency; ensuring a high standard of protection from public health risks; bringing the Maori to the same level of health as non-Maori; directing government assistance to the most needy; recognizing the needs and importance of family and non-professional caregivers and voluntary agencies; and widening the available choice of health and disability services and providers.

43. Under the restructured health system, women's access to services should be maintained and in some cases improved, particularly for Maori women. The mix of services provided would, however, change as the emphasis shifted to equity of access, effectiveness and acceptability, and health gains. Funding would also be redistributed more fairly among geographical regions. There would be more women health care providers such as Maori women running birthing centres in the Maori tribal community centres. The trend towards shorter hospital stays and de-institutionalization would undoubtedly place greater pressures on community and family-based care; and a major aim of the reforms had been to release funding from traditional institutions to that area where the need was greatest. For the first time, a consumer protection system would be set up to protect the rights of women. An ethics committee network was already in place, as was legislation to protect the privacy of health information. A consumer advocate network was being developed. Draft legislation was currently before the Parliament to appoint a health commissioner who would develop a code of consumer rights, promote awareness of those rights, investigate breaches of the code and develop guidelines for consumer advocates. Medical practitioner disciplinary legislation was also being reviewed.

Article 14

44. Although oldest sons continued to be given first choice of inheriting a family farm (CEDAW/C/NZE/2, p. 61), that was the practice but not the legal position. Nevertheless, agriculture was still perceived by many as a male occupation, even though more women than ever before were now in full partnership with their husbands, or were moving into the farming sector as managers or owners.

45. The CHAIRPERSON said that the representatives of New Zealand had given a full picture of the status of women in their country and she expressed the hope that the Government would be able, in the future, be able to withdraw its remaining reservations to the Convention.

(The Chairperson)

46. The Committee had been impressed by the measures taken in New Zealand to stem violence and, in particular, by the Government's position on violence within the family. Its very innovative measures against pornography were also to be commended.

47. New Zealand clearly recognized that the human rights of indigenous people and women needed particular protection, especially during the current time of recession. However, with respect to New Zealand's efforts to comply with article 12 of the Convention, she did not believe that the right solutions had been found to date.

48. Ms. TALLAWY said she, too, had been impressed by the thoroughness of New Zealand's report, the legislation it had enacted relating to equality issues, and by the projects implemented in connection with the celebration of the centennial of women's suffrage in that country. On the question of the repercussions of structural adjustment programmes, she wondered whether the Government had carried out any studies to assess the impact on women of cutbacks in health, education and other social programmes. Lastly, she said that New Zealand, as a developed country had certain responsibilities at the international level with respect to women's issues and she hoped that the Government would live up to its responsibilities by contributing bilateral and multilateral assistance for women's projects and by offering training courses and scholarships for foreign women.

49. Ms. ABAKA wished to know why New Zealand had not extended assistance to the Cook Islands for the preparation of a report. With regard to article 5, she was puzzled to see that New Zealand law equated domestic violence with assault on a stranger. In her view, domestic violence represented an infringement of woman's basic rights, since it involved violence directed at women simply on the basis of gender. Also, she questioned whether the Employment Contracts Act of 1991 would have a beneficial impact on the economic status of women. Indeed, it was possible that the Act could undermine the effectiveness of trade unions, many of whose members were women. Lastly, she wished to know the reason for setting the minimum age of eligibility for the country's mammography-screening pilot programmes at 50 years, since breast cancer could be detected much earlier.

50. Mr. McKINNON (New Zealand), in response to the question of Ms. ABAKA, said that, previously, New Zealand had provided assistance to the Cook Islands in preparing reports on human rights instruments. However, since the Cook Islands had become a self-governing State in free association with New Zealand, they preferred to draft their own reports.

51. Ms. AOUIJ wished to know what other special measures for women had been taken during the suffrage centennial, since it provided an opportunity for the Government to take advantage of heightened political will to adopt additional legislation. Also, she had been surprised to note the absence of paid maternity leave for women.

52. She shared the views expressed by previous speakers with regard to the Employment Contracts Act of 1991. In that connection, she wondered if women would not be put at a disadvantage in negotiations with employers as a result of

(Ms. Aouij)

the legislation. With regard to article 6 of the Convention, she asked if prostitution was legal in New Zealand and what role procurers played. Lastly, she shared the concern expressed by previous speakers regarding the equating under New Zealand law of violence against women with simple assault.

53. Ms. BUSTELO said that the report could serve as a model for other countries, however, she would have liked to see a detailed analysis of the remaining obstacles to total equality for women in New Zealand. Moreover, she hoped that, in the future, New Zealand would submit information on increases or decreases in rates of violence against women. In addition, she wished to know more regarding male attitudes towards sharing of responsibilities in the area of household work and child care. Lastly, the report could have included more information on the obstacles faced by women in attaining high-level posts, especially in government. She wondered if recent changes in New Zealand's political system had led to greater participation by women in decision-making.

54. Ms. KHAN said the report represented an extensive survey of progress made by New Zealand in promoting women's rights. However, despite specific measures taken by the Government, particularly in the area of education, differences persisted with regard to educational opportunities for Maori women as compared to other women. Having taken so many measures to create equal opportunities for Maori women, perhaps those efforts were not very effective.

55. With regard to article 6 of the Convention, she wondered why it was illegal for a prostitute to solicit a client but not for a client to solicit a prostitute. Also, in a country in which women represented only three per cent of the workforce, she found it surprising that women did not receive paid maternity leave. In that connection, she wondered what role women's organizations were taking in efforts to focus the attention of the Government on the question of paid maternity leave.

56. Ms. MAKINEN said that, since economic independence of women was the basis for de facto independence of women in society, she took an interest in employment issues affecting women. According to information from non-governmental organizations, unemployed persons in New Zealand were required to wait six months before receiving unemployment benefits. She wondered how mothers with children were supported during the six-month waiting period. Also, she shared the concerns expressed by previous speakers regarding the absence of paid maternity leave.

57. Ms. NIKOLAEVA said she found the report to be very satisfactory overall. However, the Committee needed to have more information regarding the specific steps taken to implement and enforce women's rights legislation in New Zealand. For example, to date, New Zealand had not removed its reservations to the Convention in certain important areas. Also, the number of women holding seats in Parliament remained low. With respect to the law on equal opportunity employment, she noted that the unemployment rates for women continued to outpace those for men. The reason for the difference, as explained in the report, was that women did not work full time; however, if that was the case, New Zealand

(Ms. Nikolaeva)

would need to do more to encourage women to take full-time jobs. Also, if the social security benefits received by men and women were equal, women were being short-changed, since women tended to live longer than men. Lastly, she agreed with the comments of previous speakers regarding violence against women.

58. Ms. OUEDRAOGO said that the report provided a very detailed picture of the actual situation in New Zealand with respect to discrimination against women. However, she believed New Zealand needed to take further steps to eliminate discrimination against minority women. Social welfare programmes directed towards minority women should be extended. Also, the Government needed to devote more attention to the problems of new types of families, including single-parent families. Furthermore, there was a need for additional steps to ease the problem of women's unemployment and to increase women's salaries.

59. Ms. SCHOPP-SCHILLING said that she hoped the next report would speak at greater length about the obstacles encountered in eliminating discrimination against women in New Zealand. She noted on page 12 of the report that the Human Rights Commission Act 1977 did not cover private clubs and political parties and wondered why that was.

60. On the issue of equal pay for equal work, it was noted in the report (p. 40) that the Working Party on Equity in Employment had decided that it was not in its province to deal with the question. Yet much work was currently being done, for instance, in the United States in re-evaluating women's jobs, and a body such as the Working Party could unquestionably do some such work in New Zealand without interfering with the private sector, simply by pointing out the kinds of methods that had to be followed by both employers and trade unions to achieve greater equity in pay.

61. Ms. LIN Shangzhen said that she was pleased that the Ministry of Women's Affairs was so well budgeted and staffed, and wondered whether there were corresponding local mechanisms dealing with women's issues that could support the Ministry's work. She would also like information on the position of that Ministry on structural adjustment.

62. Ms. UKEJE commended New Zealand for a beautifully prepared and interesting report and urged that Government to review the legislation on maternity benefits.

63. The effects of structural adjustment hurt women the most, and the Committee must take a position on the matter, perhaps requesting a study that would allow it to suggest ways of mitigating its impact.

64. Ms. GARCIA-PRINCE observed that the richness of the information in the replies given showed that New Zealand was aware of the existence of a discriminatory culture in the country and had the political will to combat it. In the next report there should be a clearer and franker discussion of the critical areas of discrimination with which the Government was grappling. It should also provide more information about the impact of the structural adjustment programme, especially as it concerned the employment of women in a shrinking labour market.

(Ms. Garcia-Prince)

65. She would also like further information on the equality of men and women under the inheritance law, on institutions through which women could claim their rights, and on the situation of Maori women working in the political and public sectors.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.